

A
L E T T E R

To the Reverend the
Clergy of both Universities,
Concerning the

T R I N I T Y
A N D T H E

Athanasian Creed.

With REFLECTIONS on all the late Hypotheses;
particularly Dr. W's, Dr. S--th's; The Trinity
placed in its due Light; The 28 Propositions;
The calm Discourse of a Trinity in the Godhead;
and the Defence of Dr. Sherlock's Notions.

With a short Discourse concerning MYSTERIES.

Non quis, sed quid.

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A LETTER concerning the Trinity, and the Athanasian Creed.

CHAP. I.

The Introduction.

Gentlemen;

1. **I** Shall make no Apology for proposing these Difficulties to you: for as it is my Duty to get the best Light and Information I can, to promote my eternal Happiness; so it is yours (who are best able) to give me all the Help and Assistance you can. Could I have satisfied my self by reading what our Divines (who so extremely clash with one another) have written on this Subject, I should not have given you nor my self this Trouble.

2. To engage you the more freely to comply with my Desires, you will have an Opportunity not only to satisfy me, but also a great Number of pious Men, who are affected with the same Doubts, which are occasioned in a great measure by the great Difference and Divisions that are amongst the Clergy about the Doctrine of the Trinity; who (it is true) agree in affirming that Doctrine is a Fundamental Article, and that Mens Salvation depends upon believing aright concerning the Persons, yet they extremely differ about the meaning of the word *Person*, without the knowing of which it is impossible to apprehend what the Three are.

3. A Man that is obliged to believe a thing, must first know what it is before he

can believe it, otherwise he may be obliged to believe he knows not what; it being impossible to believe any thing concerning empty Sounds, or Words that have no Idea's fix'd to them. One can neither affirm or deny, believe or disbelieve a Proposition that he does not understand; it is impossible to assert somewhat of nothing, and what he has no Idea of is nothing to him: One may as well be obliged to do a thing when he knows not what he is to do, as to believe when he cannot apprehend what he is to believe. To this it may be said, We are obliged to believe there is a God, tho he is infinitely above our Apprehension. I answer, We are not required to believe more of God than we can conceive of him, nor is it possible, because Belief is nothing else but the supposing the Idea's we have of any thing are true; and where we have no Idea's, there is no Subject for us to exercise our Belief upon. If we did not apprehend what he is, how could we say that he is an all-good, all-powerful, all-wise Being? If any thing be so far a Mystery as to be hid from Human Understanding, it is impossible to believe it: A Man may believe there are Mysteries, or hidden things, but he cannot believe those very Mysteries, as long as they continue such. If Belief could be had with-

our Knowledge, Beasts might be as capable of it as Men: From whence it is evident, that a Man that has no Idea at all, nor no true one of the three Persons, is no more capable of believing aright concerning them, than a blind Man is of Colours. And if we will believe some of our eminent Churchmen, the utmost Knowledge we can have of them, is like that of a blind Man, who may believe there is somewhat called Colours, tho he knows not what; so may we believe that the Persons are not meer nothings, but three somethings, tho what we can nowise conceive.

4. But is not this to ridicule the Christian Religion, and render it most absurd and irrational, in obliging People to put their Trust in three they know not what, and to pay Divine Worship to each of them, when the meer Light of Nature obligeth Man not to adore for God any thing, but what he believes to be an Omniscient and an Omnipotent Being, both able to know and relieve his Wants, and accept his Thanksgivings? To pay Divine Worship to any thing else is Idolatry; but to worship they know not what, or can frame no Idea of, is the worst of all Idolatries. To oblige People to worship three, and not to let them know what the three are, is bawking instead of instructing them, tho in a matter of infinite Concern; it is to give them a Liberty to take what they please (provided they stick to the Number Three) for the Objects of their Worship. But if the three have any determinate Sense, (as there can be no doubt if there are three but they have) it must be Idolatry to take them in any other sense, because it is directing our Worship to wrong Objects, and adoring three that we ought not to adore, and consequently the Mistake can be nothing less than Idolatry.

5. And the Danger of falling into it cannot but be very great since there are so many wrong Trinities, and more every day increasing, Authors having such different Ideas of them, that there are almost as many Trinities as Writers, each having a new

one of his own; and their Trinities are not only divers, but opposite, as Properties and Essences, Modes and Minds, external Denomination and real Beings, &c.

6. They agree only in the same Words, by which they make their Party and Number appear the more considerable; but on the account of their Divisions and Subdivisions, they are the most inconsiderable of all Sects; and their Differences had been much greater, had the Generality but explained what they mean by Persons, which they say must not be taken in its ordinary sense, but what other they should take it in, they are so far from agreeing, that they are infinitely divided amongst themselves, scarce three that venture to explain themselves, being of the same Mind; and they that have published what they supposed the three are, have fallen into gross Contradictions, plain Polytheism or Sabellianism: And this has not been made apparent by the Unitarians only, but by our own Writers themselves, who have sufficiently shown the Absurdities and Contradictions of one another; and he that has the good luck to write last, is sure to expose those who had the Misfortune to handle this Subject before him.

7. Whilst each condemns the several Explications of the rest as either inconsistent with the Unity or the Trinity, do they not all in their turns (say the Unitarians) bear witness that our Opposition to the Trinitarian Doctrine is well grounded and reasonable? And is it not a grand Presumption that their Adversaries are in the wrong, since they destroy one another's Hypotheses, but raise none but what are liable to the like Exceptions? and ought not each Sect be less assuming, since not only the Unitarians, but all the other Trinitarians condemn them as guilty of paying Divine Worship to three to whom they ought not? And ought not the Unitarians to be treated with more Moderation, at least, until their Adversaries agree whether it be a Trinity of Minds, Essences, Somewhats, Attributes, Faculties, Modes, External Denominations, &c. they must

must adore? To punish them before we can tell or agree what it is they ought to be punished for (to say no worse of it) is very odd, and yet in prosecuting them is the only thing the Trinitarians agree in. In

their Exp'anations they differ more and wider with one another than they do with the Unitarians themselves. But of that more hereafter.

C H A P. II.

Reasonings upon the Athanasian Creed.

2. **T**HERE is nothing, with Submission to these learned Writers who have so much vexed this Controversy, more unaccountable and absurd, than their jangling and wrangling about the meaning of the word *Person*: it is a great Argument they have forgot, or do not believe the Athanasian Creed, which saith, *We are compelled by the Christian Verity to acknowledg every Person to be by himself God.* And if a Person was any thing but God, or not the same with God, it would be Idolatry to worship him. Is it not a Demonstration that those that pay the highest Adoration to a Person, have no different Idea's of God and a Divine Person, but by adoring him do acknowledg him to be God? and is not a Divine Person an Uncreate, Eternal, Incomprehensible, Almighty Being? And what is God but such a Being? We cannot have an higher Idea of God than that he is such a Person; and to frame any other, it must be one that is lower, and consequently Blasphemy against God. Were there any thing more in God than in a Divine Person, he could not be God, because there would be somewhat wanting in him to make him God. In a word, if a Person be God, there can be no real Difference or Distinction between them; for no Being can be bet it self, it is the same with it self, and distinct and different from all others. And it is evident the Scripture makes them the same: For *Heb. 1. 3.* the Apostle calls *Christ the express Image of God's Person*: And *Col. 1. 15.* he calls him *the Image of the Invisible*

God: which two places shew there is no more Difference between the Person of God and God, than there is between the Person of a Man and a Man.

9. If a Man is an Animal, all that is in the Idea of Animal must be contained in that of Man, otherwise he could not be an Animal. There is (it is true) more in the Man, as Rationality, which is wanting in the Animal: but I suppose they will not say the same concerning a Person, that he is God, and somewhat more than God; especially when they say, that in the Idea of God is contain'd that of three Persons. But to speak properly, truly and naturally, Man is no other Animal than that which is rational, a Man is a rational Animal, and a rational Animal is a Man, they are convertible Terms, and are only different Words to express the same Being. So a Divine Person and God are convertible Terms; for there cannot be more in the Idea of God than of a Divine Person, because he is God: And it is as evident that there is nothing contained in the Idea of a Divine Person that is not contained in that of God: To affirm the contrary, would be so far from making God three Persons, that there would be something wanting to make him one Person. Person is a Term which we give to all Intelligent Beings, either Man, Angel or God: and as we have no different Idea's of Man, and a Human Person, or of Angel or Angelical Person, so we have the same Idea of God, and a Divine Person; and God is in Holy Writ described as a Person:

Person : and as the Father (who is a Person) is God ; so God, as appears by a great Number of Texts, is a Person, viz. the Father. So that it is evident, there is nothing more in the Idea of one than of the other, and that they are predicated of one another, and are convertible Terms, and only different Words, which signify the Self-same all-perfect Being. From whence it is evident, how absurd it is to say a Divine Person is a Mode, an Attribute, a Property, or a Somewhat, &c.

10. Having, according to my weak Ability, vindicated the Honour of a Divine Person, and cleared the Athanasian Creed from speaking so contemptibly of him : I must desire of you to inform me how it is possible, since God and a Divine Person are the very same Being, that there should be three Persons and but one God ; is it not saying that there are three Gods, and but one ? or at least three *Dei* and but one God ? since there is no more Difference between a Divine Person and God, than there is between God and *Deus*. To say that each Person by himself, that is singly and distinct from others, is God, and yet all three together are but one God, is to say a single Person is and is not God : It is to say the Persons are three and one in the same respect, viz. God, because the three and the one are the self-same God. In affirming God is three Persons, and yet one Person is God, the very same God that is three Persons, you affirm that there are three and not three Persons contained in the Idea of God. And does not the Creed make it Damnation to believe any Difference or Distinction between God and a single Person, because that must be denying each Person is God ? And does it not also make it Damnation not to believe a Difference, nay so great a One as that three of the first are but one of the last ? so that this good, charitable Creed only damns all those that cannot believe a Divine Person is, and is not the same with God. In a Word, God, except at the same time he is three and not three Persons, must either be three or not

three Persons. If he be not three Persons, then there is an End of the Trinity ; and if he be three, then a single Person is not God, because God is three Persons. A Divine Person is either an entire God, or a Part, or an Attribute, or Property of God, or somewhat that is neither God, nor Part, nor Property of God. If a Person be an entire God, then there must be as many Gods as Persons ; but if but a Part or Attribute or Property of God, then each Person is not God, because only a Part or Property of God ; but if he is neither God, nor a Part nor Property of God, no number of Persons whatever can be God. But if the first Person, and that God who is called the Father, are the same numerical Being, and if the second Person is that God which is called the Son, and the third Person be the same with that God which is called the Spirit, are there not as many Gods as Persons, since they are convertible Terms, and signify the same Beings ? How do you prove that there are three Almighty Incomprehensible Persons, but because there are three, each of whom is an Almighty Incomprehensible Person ? Does not the same Argument prove that there are three Gods, since there are three, each of whom is God ? Is not God predicated of each of the three as well as Person ? If there are three Almighty and Divine Persons, there must be three Divinities, for the Divinities must be as different, as the Divine Persons are to whom they belong, and three Divinities necessarily infer three Gods. I humbly desire to know the difference between three Gods, and three, each of whom is God : if one is one God, will it not follow that three that are distinct from one another, each by himself God, are three Gods ? To number three Divine Persons, and to say each is God, or to say they are three Gods, is it not only a different Way of expressing the same things, and equally inconsistent with both, to say there is but one God ? If one Eternal Almighty Person, as for instance the Father, be one all-perfect God,

God, to whom nothing at all can be added, is it not down right Effrontry to deny three such Persons are three Gods? If an Almighty Person be multiplied, must not God be so too, except there are two Almighty Persons, and neither of them God? To affirm the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Spirit is God, and yet there is but one God, is it not to affirm there are three Gods in Number, and yet but one in Number.

11. If these things must not be called Contradictions, they must at least be allowed to be unintelligible, and consequently can never be the Subject-matter of Belief: and do not People, like Parrots, repeat these Propositions without apprehending them? Is it not saying a thing, and then unsaying it again, which is saying nothing at all? If the last Clause is to be believed, the first cannot, because the last is a Negation of the first; and if the first is to be believ'd, for that very reason the last cannot. The Parts of any of these Articles, when considered by themselves, it is easy to apprehend; as for instance, when I say the Father is God, the Son is God, the Spirit is God, or that there are three Persons each of whom is God, these Words are very intelligible, so are these, there is but one God; but when I join these together I only contradict my self, and in so doing say nothing at all. I then can apprehend no Sense or Meaning in them, and consequently they cannot be the Subject of my Belief, or of God's Revelation.

12. For that can never be revealed unto Man, which he is not capable of understanding; and if all must be damned that do not believe the Achanasian Creed, the Compiler himself cannot avoid that Fate.

13. In short, can there be a more absurd Attempt than to endeavour to prove there are three Divine Persons, each of whom is God, and yet but one God? Because the Arguments that prove there is but one God, must prove that there is but one Divine Person, because God and a Divine Person are the same: and on the contrary, the Arguments that prove three Persons, must prove three

Gods, because a Person is God. As to the last, all the Answer I ever met with is, that you do not say each is a God; if we affirmed that each is a God, it would be, say you, a manifest Contradiction to say there is but one God. But why may we not say of several Divine Persons, that each is a God, as say of several Humane Persons, that each is a Man; since God and Man are Universals, and predicated of more Persons than one? And each Divine Person is as much of himself God, as each Humane Person is Man. To speak improperly will by no Means solve the Contradictions.

14. If the Father is an Infinite All-perfect Being, and if the Son is distinct from the Father, he must, if he be a God, be a Distinct Infinite, All-perfect Being: for the same Being can be noways distinct from himself, and certainly two Distinct All-perfect Beings are two Distinct Gods.

15. Are not the Father and the Son Relatives, and consequently cannot subsist but in different Subjects, and what Subject has each but God? the Father is God, the Son is God, and consequently different Gods, because different Divine Subjects.

16. If the Son is the same God, as he is that begot a Son, he must beget a Son too, except the same God did, and did not beget a Son; but if he begot a Son, he begot himself, which is begetting nothing at all, because he himself must be before he could act, that is beget himself.

17. To suppose the Persons the self-same God, is wholly to confound them: because then there could be no more distinction between them, than between the self-same God and himself; and it would be as impossible to pray to one, and not to the others, as to pray and not to pray to the self-same God.

18. If God be three Persons, and each Person is God, there must be nine Persons; because each single Person must be three Persons, otherwise he could not be God, who is three Persons; yet all these Persons noways differ from one Person, one Person is one God, and the several Persons are but the

the self-same God; and can be no more distinguished from one Person, than the self-same God can be distinguished from himself, because the several Persons, and the single Person and God, are the self-same Being.

19. Let the Terms Person and God signify whatever Men please, yet as long as they say that each of the Persons is one God, and that the three Persons are the same God, there can be no difference between three Persons and one, nor between first, second and third Person.

20. For those things, according to the common Sense of Mankind, are the same with themselves, that are the same with a third; and all Knowledge, but intuitive, depends upon the Truth of it: for when by comparing of two Ideas together, their Agreement cannot be discovered, if they, by comparing them with a third, are found to be the same with it, it is an evident Demonstration that they are the same amongst themselves; so that if the three Persons, and one Person, and the first, second and third Person are the same with God, (otherwise none of them could be God) they are the same with one another, only different Words to signify the same Being. To deny this is to deny as certain a Demonstration as can be, and to affirm it would be to destroy all intuitive Knowledge, because by comparing, without the Intervention of any third, the Idea's of one and three, of first, second and third, their Difference is most evidently seen.

21. On the contrary, if the Persons are really distinct, and each is God, must not each be God distinct from the others? For nothing without manifest Absurdity can be distinctly predicated of three distinct Persons, if it do not distinctly belong to each: and if the Father is God, considered as distinct from the other two, and if each of the other two is distinct from him, and one another, will there not be three distinct Gods, and consequently three divers and different Gods? For all distinction, that is

more than nominal, supposeth at least a numerical Difference and Diversity; and if God the Father be not God the Son, nor God the Son God the Spirit, there must be a numerical Difference between them; which every one that can number three must needs know are three Gods; for one God, and one God, and one God, none of which are the other, are three Gods.

22. To say they are three Persons and but one God, is a senseless Evasion; because God is contained in the Idea of a Divine Person, a Divine Person is God: If a Person is not God, but a Somewhat distinct and different from God, no number of Persons whatever can be God.

23. Is it not equally as absurd to suppose three Infinite Persons as three Gods? And the same Arguments that demonstrate the Impossibility of the one, equally demonstrate the Impossibility of the other. I desire to know but any one Argument that holds in one case, that does not in the other. Where is the Difference between one God, and one Divine Person with all the Divine Perfections inhering in him, and so between three such Persons and three Gods?

24. To suppose three All-sufficient Persons, is it not to suppose two Persons to no end or purpose, because one All-sufficient Person as well as one God, is sufficient for all things whatever? The Truth of this is so very evident, that our Clergy are forced to confess it; yet they on pain of Damnation require that we must believe three such Persons, (For which of the Persons is not All-sufficient?) an All-sufficient Father, and an All-sufficient Son, and an All-sufficient Spirit. Whatsoever is necessarily in God, must contain some Perfection; but what Perfection is it for God to be more than one All-sufficient Person? for if one is All-sufficient, the rest must be useless and superfluous, and consequently there cannot be a greater Affront to the Divine Nature, than to suppose two such Persons in it. But if it be a Perfection in God to be more Persons than one, the more Persons he is, the greater his Perfection

ons are; and God who has Infinity of Perfections, would be infinite in Persons; and an infinite Number will no more destroy the Unity of God than three.

25. There cannot be supposed in God more Persons than one, without supposing an infinite Number; for what Reason soever moved the first Person to beget two Persons equal to himself, the same Reason (because their Nature is the same) must move the others to beget their Equals, and so on to Infinity.

26. If the first Person produced two equal to himself, it was no doubt an Essential Perfection of his Nature, otherwise he might have chosen whether he would have produced them, and they, when produced, would have had but a precarious dependent Being, since they must depend upon his Will and Pleasure for their continuance in Being, as well as for their Being. But if it be not essential to the Nature of the Son and Spirit to produce more Persons equal to themselves, their Nature is not the same with the Father's, and they want Perfections that he has, or rather had; who since he now produceth no Persons equal to himself, has lost a Perfection that is essential to his Nature, and consequently ceases to be all perfect: So that the Nature of the thing demonstrates that there is not, nor can there be more than one All-sufficient Person.

27. To suppose three All-sufficient Persons in God, is to suppose God more than All-sufficient; for if there be in God three such Persons, there must be in him three All-sufficiencies, which is sufficiently absurd: for how can there be an Addition to all, or how can God be more than All-sufficient?

28. Is it not a Contradiction to suppose three Infinities of the same sort, because it is supposing infinite Addition to infinite? If it is absurd to suppose more than one infi-

nite Space, why is it not as absurd to suppose more than one infinite Person?

29. By what has been said, it is evident that three Divine Persons can no more exist than three Gods, and that there is no real Difference between a Divine Person and God; and it is as evident that the Church in her Liturgy and Creeds owns them to be the same: Yet when the Unitarians affirm you are guilty of gross Impiety of adoring three Gods, in paying Divine Worship to three Persons, then you contradict your selves, and deny that God and a Divine Person are the same, and say that by Person you mean a *Je ne sçay quoi*, somewhat that is inconceivable, as well as inexpressible. Nothing can be more disingenuous, than to say you do not apprehend what a Person is, when you constantly say that the Father, whom you mean by the first Person, is God, and say the same of the second and third Person.

30. But this prevaricating can serve to no purpose; for either a Divine Person and God are, or are not the same: if they are not the same, it is Idolatry to pay Divine Worship to a Person, because you pay Divine Worship to a Somewhat that is not God: But if God and Person are the same, the paying Divine Worship to the three Persons is the worshipping of three Gods, because three Gods and three Persons are the same.

31. The same Argument will hold whatever Name you give the three; nay, tho you are so very cautious as only to say the *Three*, yet as long as you pay Divine Worship to each, you own three Gods; because the three are three Objects of Divine Worship: for when you worship one, you do not worship the other two, but each by himself; and you your selves own that nothing but God, without Idolatry, can be an Object of Divine Worship, and consequently three Objects of Divine Worship are three Gods.

CHAP. III.

Of the Nominal Trinitarians.

32. **T**HE next thing that in this Creed seems to be as difficult to be apprehended, as three Persons and one God, is, that not only a Father and a Son (which all Mankind agree do signify not only two distinct, but two opposite substantial Beings) but also a Spirit proceeding from both, (which demonstrates that he is a Substance distinct from both) are the self-same substantial Being; or in other words, three Persons, and one Substance. But this is only the Opinion of the Nominal Trinitarians, such as Dr. S—th, Dr. W—s. &c. but the real Trinitarians, who hold three real natural Persons, such as Tr. Sh. the Author of the 28 Propositions, &c. tho they solemnly damn all that do not believe this Creed, do themselves assert as many Substances as Persons; but of the difference between them, I shall have occasion to speak hereafter.

33. If one Person be not a Substance, no Number of Persons (that are not substantial) can be a Substance. But if a Person be a Substance, there must be three Substances, because Substance is contained in the Idea of Person, and consequently as many Substances as Persons. All that we apprehend of a Divine Person is, that he is the Subject in which all the Divine Attributes exist, that he is (as the Creed declares) Almighty, Eternal, &c. which is the same we apprehend of the Divine Substance: tho we use the word Person rather than Substance; yet all we perceive by either of them, or of the Divine Nature, Essence, God, or any other word we call the Supreme Being by, is, that they are the Subject in which the Divine Attributes inhere, and are only different words to express the Divine Being by.

34. But it is said, tho a Person is a Substance, yet there is but one Substance, because each Person is this one Substance. But if the Father is this one Substance, how can the Son, who is not the Father, and consequently not that substantial Being which is the Father, be this Substance? Or how can the Spirit, who is neither of these substantial Beings, be it? Is it not to say the first Person is the Divine Substance, then to deny it by saying the second is, and to deny that too, by saying the third is, which is nothing less than a Trinity of Contradictions?

35. They confess it is a Contradiction to say, that the same Substance is in three created Beings, but they say it may be otherwise in uncreated or infinite Beings, because the Reason is not the same between Finite and Infinite Beings; and let the Socinians (say they) prove, if they can, that the self-same infinite Substance cannot be in three Persons: So far I am of their Mind, that it is a hard thing to prove it, so it is any self-evident Proposition. It contradicts our clearest Idea's, to suppose the same numerical Substance that is in one Person to be at the same time in another; and we can as little apprehend what we mean, when we say the same numerical Substance constitutes three infinite Persons, as when we say the same Substance constitutes three finite Persons: Is not the Reason the same between an infinite Person and an infinite Substance, as between a finite Person and a finite Substance? Does not the Idea of an infinite Person comprehend the Idea of an infinite Substance, as well as the Idea of a finite Person that of a finite Substance? If by reason of the Difference between finite and infinite,

infinite, there is a Difference between the Number of Persons that the Substance is in, it would follow that the Difference of Number is infinite; for the infinite Distance which is between a finite and infinite Substance, which they say causeth the Difference of Number, necessarily supposeth this. For the same Substance to be wholly in one, and at the same time wholly in another, is in it self inconsistent, and consequently must be so, whatsoever Subjects it is predicated of. For,

36. If those Idea's that are in their own Nature inconsistent, are not so when spoken of infinite Beings, we cannot deny any thing absolutely of an infinite Being. Would it not be very ridiculous to say, that tho it is impossible for a finite Being to *be*, and *not to be*, yet it may be otherwise in infinite Beings? for the Reason is not the same, &c. The Rule (it is true) of arguing from one to the other does not always hold: But that, which according to the Idea's we have of either, appears to be a Contradiction we cannot believe, because a Contradiction is an affirming and denying the same thing of the same Subject at the same time, which we are sure can never be predicated of any Subject whatsoever nature it is of. But it may be said, that they perhaps are no Contradictions in themselves, but only according to our Idea's of things; which granting to be true, yet it is impossible to believe what appears to us an Affirmation and a Negation of the same thing. We cannot believe that three Beings, whether finite or infinite, each of which is a substantial Being, have the same Substance, because it is saying they are three and not three, but only one substantial Being; because, according to those Idea's we have of things, the Substance of any Being, and the Properties that belong to it, are noways different from the Being it self; so that if they are the same Substance, they have the same Properties, and are the self-same Person, without any manner of Difference between them. If one is not the other, and each is a Sub-

stance, the Substance of one can be no more the Substance of another, than the Being of one can be the Being of another. By what has been said, I think it is very evident, that according to those Idea's we have of Substance and Person, it is a flat Contradiction to say, there are three of the one, and but one of the other. If you change your Idea's of them, and not tell what Idea's you have, it is impossible to be for or against that Opinion. If you say you have no Idea's of a Divine Person, you talk like Parrots when you affirm or deny any thing concerning what you have no Idea of.

37. If the Persons are the same Substance, then the same Substance is begotten, and unbegotten; and yet the Substance that is begotten and unbegotten, is neither begotten nor unbegotten, but proceeding. So the same Substance is self-existent and not self-existent from all Eternity; self-existent as it is the Father's, but doubly not self-existent as it is the Son's and Spirit's; so the same Substance is incarnate and not incarnate: but if the Divine Substance is incarnate, must not the three Persons be incarnate, because the Persons are noway distinct from the Divine Substance, and the Properties that are in it? In a Word, to suppose but one Substance, is really to destroy the Son and Spirit; because the Divine Substance could not beget any new Substance, because that would be to suppose (contrary to the Creed) two Substances; nor could any Attributes or Modes, or any thing that inheres in a Substance be begot, because they cannot subsist by themselves; nor can any thing that is in the self-existent Substance, be said to be begot or proceed from the Divine Substance, because they are as self-existent as the Divine Substance it self: so that it is evident, nothing did proceed, or was begotten; which does necessarily destroy the Trinity, and the Doctrines depending upon it.

38. The last Evasion is, that tho the Persons are the same numerical Substance. yet
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there is a Difference between them, because they are three different Ways the same. But supposing the Divine Substance to be three different Ways the same, yet this would not make any Difference or Distinction between the (supposed) Persons, because every Person is the Divine Substance, which is three different Ways the same, and consequently must have the same Attributes, Modes, and every thing else the same, that is in, or appertains to the Divine Substance. The same Substance necessarily supposes the same Attributes, Properties, Qualities or Modes, which cannot exist but in a Substance; so that if the Substance be three different ways the same, a Person must be three different ways the same. To be different, and yet the same, is a Contradiction; nor is the matter mended by three different ways the same: for the same Substance can be no ways different from it self, which it must be if it makes three different Persons,

each of whom is the same Substance. To be, is common to all things, it is the different ways of Being that makes the Difference between Things; and three different ways of Being makes three different Things. In short, none but a Metaphysician could have found out this Distinction of the same Substance having three different Modes of subsisting, or being three different ways the same, which is wholly unintelligible, and consequently impossible to be believed: It is a Multiplication without an Addition, for to be three, or three thousand ways the same, adds nothing to a Being; for if it did, it would not be the same: So to subtract from a Being all the different ways of being the same, nothing is diminished from the Being which is still the same; so that as one is a Multiplication without any Addition, the other is a Subtraction without any Diminution.

CHAP. IV.

Of the Animadverter's Hypothesis.

39. **T**HE common Opinion of the Trinitarians, even from the beginning (if we may believe the Animadverter) has been, that the three Persons are not three Substances, Attributes, Properties, or any real, but only incompleat Beings, viz. three Modes, which he saith have no Existence of their own, such as *Absence, Presence, Dependence, Change*, (which by the Animadverter's leave are not Modes, but Relations) or which will (as he saith) make one have a clearer Idea of them; they are the same in Divine, as *Posture* in human Beings. If the Persons are no more than three such Modes, the Difference between the Unitarians and Trinitarians is only, Whether the Divine Substance or Person (taking Person in the proper sense) has three Modes, or but one be-

longing to him, which even according to him, is but an immaterial and trifling Difference, because the Modes being but incompleat and not real things, can cause no real Distinction: Two at least of which may be absent without the least Alteration in the Divine Substance or Properties. Besides, we cannot apprehend any thing in the Divine Nature analogous to *Posture*, and three Modes of the same sort (as the three Persons are) are wholly unintelligible: How can we apprehend three Presences or three Absences (for these are his Modes) of the same Substance? it is as impossible to distinguish three such Modes, as it is three Attributes of the same sort; as for instance, three infinite Wisdoms in the same Divine Substance. But it is said, a Person is not a mere Mode,
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but the Divine Substance with a peculiar Mode ; but if each Person is the Divine Substance, he must have in him all the Modes, because he is the Divine Substance, in which the Modes subsist. To suppose any manner of Distinction between them, is to suppose a Distinction between the same Substance and it self, and that the same Substance has Modes in it which the same Substance has not.

40. But can three Modes (supposing they did really exist) cause so great a Difference in the Divine Substance, that it at the same time shall be and shall not be incarnate, shall give Satisfaction to it self and receive it from it self, can be both the Sender and the Sent, &c?

41. If there be any Thought, Word, or any of those Actions that are proper to Intelligent Beings, that belongs to one and not to the other, it shows that they are more than distinct Modes, they are distinct, intelligent, substantial Beings. And are not the Father and the Son in Scripture frequently opposed to one another as Intelligent Beings? The Father knowing and loving the Son, is not the Son's knowing and loving the Father; but each has a numerically distinct Knowledge and Affection, and consequently each his Essence must be as distinct as his Properties are. To deny that they are substantial Beings, is not only to ungod them, and to deny that they are the Subjects in which any of the Divine Attributes exist, but to deny they have any Power to understand, to will, of which only substantial Beings are capable.

42. They may as well say, several Men are but one Man with different Modes of subsisting, as say, God the Father, and God the Son are different Modes of one God, or one Divine Substance. They call them distinct Modes, but by paying Divine Worship to each, and by giving to each, distinct from the other, Divine Titles and Attributes, they own them to be distinct Gods. They are most admirable Modes, that have all the Divine Perfections inhering in each of them.

43. The Animadverter sufficiently proves this has been the Opinion of the Orthodox for above 800 Years. But this must be said for them, they were in a manner forced into it, because they had no other way to keep up some face of a Trinity, and avoid professing the apparent and open Trichieism of the Nicene Fathers, who held the three Almighty Substantial Persons, were no otherwise one God, than because they had the same common Nature : And for the same reason they supposed three Men, as having the same Human Nature, to be but one Man. It had been impossible to have made that Question intelligible, (about which the Eastern and Western Bishops so fiercely contended) viz. Whether the Spirit proceeded from the Father alone, or from the Father and Son, had they believed them the self-same substantial Being. But this Trichieistical Notion was held (as the Bishop of *Savon* observes) until after the fifth Century, but *Ciriacellus* proves it prevailed much longer; but at last the Clergy having found out (a wonderful Discovery indeed!) that three Infinite, Almighty, Substantial Beings are three Gods, and fearing there was no way of disguising so self-evident a Truth from the most ordinary Capacities, yet not daring to call in Question what the Authority of so many Fathers and Councils had made sacred, they pretended that the Fathers (when in opposition to the *Arians*, who held the Persons are of an unlike Substance) said, they are of the same Substance, that they meant the same numerical Substance. And which is most unaccountable, tho the Moderns said there is no other Trinity than of three Modes subsisting in one Divine Substance, yet they continued the old way of worshipping them as three distinct Almighty Beings.

44. In a word, that one Almighty Being should have three Modes or Manners of being the same Almighty Being, is a piece of Jargonry that cannot be apprehended, and consequently not believed; and it is no less than a Contradiction, to say that one Almighty

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mighty Being, by having three manners of being, should be three Persons, each of whom is an Almighty Being: It is in plain English to say, that one Almighty Being does so subsist as to be three Almighty Beings.

45. But granting there are never so many Modes, yet if each Person has the Divine Substance, he must necessarily have all the

Modes, because they are Modes of the Divine Substance; except the self-same Substance has Modes that the self-same Substance has not, or that they are not Modes but Substances, and subsist by themselves and not in the Divine Substance. Nor can Modes (if there are any such in God) be less self-existent than the Substance, since they are Modes of the Substance, which is self-existent.

C H A P. V.

Of the Hypothesis of Dr. W--s. Of the Author of the Trinity placed in its due light. And the rest of the Nominal Trinitarians.

45. BESIDES the Abettors of this Opinion, there are a great many Trinitarians who no otherwise differ from the Unitarians than in Name, whose Trinities they not only allow but contend for. Some of them say, (and Dr. W. has writ in Defence of it) that the three Persons are only three external Denominations of God, according to the different Operations of his Goodness towards his Creatures, in creating, redeeming and sanctifying them; which Actions (it is true) can only belong to a Person, but they noways suppose different Persons: it is purely a nominal Distinction in calling the same Person by different Names, according as his Actions are different. What Unitarian ever denied that God is our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier? Others say that the Persons are the same in God, as Faculties in Man, viz. Understanding, Will, and Memory: But these are not Persons, but Powers and Abilities belonging to a Person, as the Understanding is that Ability a Person has to perceive and compare Idea's together; the Will the Power to prefer thinking of one thing before another, &c. the Memory the Power of recollecting Idea's. Others say the three Persons are the three Attributes of God, Power, Wisdom and Goodness;

(and in Defence of that Opinion there is a Book lately written, called, *The Doctrine of the Trinity placed in its due Light*): But if there are no other Trinities but these, none but an Atheist, who denies the Being of a God, denies that God has an Understanding and Will; and, tho' not properly speaking, a Memory or Power of recollecting Idea's, because the Idea's of all things are always present to him; or denies that God is infinitely good, wise and powerful. If there be no other Trinity but of Infinite Goodness, Wisdom and Power in one Divine Being, is it not Idolatry to pay Divine Worship to three Beings, each of which (since each is God) has infinite Wisdom, Power and Goodness? Or if there is but one Being with infinite Understanding, is it not unlawful to adore three such Beings, each of which has an unlimited Understanding? Or if there is but one, that is our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, is it not Polytheism to adore three, each of whom is a supreme Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier? Do not these Men the more they prove their Hypotheses, the clearer demonstrate themselves guilty of Idolatry? Against whom do they write but against themselves, and practice of Mother-Church? not against the Unitarians,

rians, who are really as zealous as they pretend to be, to defend the sacred Truth of only one Divine Being or Person, with infinite Wisdom, Power and Goodness, who created, redeemed and sanctified Mankind: Yet these are the Champions of the Trinitarian Cause. With what Applause were the Sabellian Notions of Dr. W's three Respects or Relations, preach'd before the University of Oxford? How has Dr. S—th been admired for making the three Almighty Persons three Modes or Postures? It must be a strange unaccountable Doctrine that they pretend to vindicate, since they have no better way of defending it but by betraying it and writing against it.

47. Do not the Unitarians owe these Men their utmost Acknowledgments for vindicating their way of Worship, and for joining with them against the Polytheists and disguised Pagans? for so, according to their Principles, they must look on all those that adore three all-knowing Substances, Minds or Spirits, as Dr. S—th does Dr. Sherl. Is it not very strange, that they that pretend to believe but one Almighty Being, Mind or Spirit, can join with them, and use the very same Words and Expressions as they do who adore three Almighty Essences, Spirits or Minds? It is very evident one Party must grossly prevaricate with God and Man. I would willingly know of the Nominal Trinitarians, which of their Modes, Attributes, Faculties, external Denominations, &c. is God the Father, which is God the Son, and which is God the Spirit, and how they beget and proceed from one another? Must not these Notions be very uncouth when they are applied to the Incarnation and Satisfaction? But when they speak of these, then they are real Trinitarians; so are they when they endeavour to prove the Spirit and *Logos* to be Persons; then they take Person in the same sense as the real Trinitarians do, and say they are not the Power and Wisdom of God, because the Scripture relates such Actions of them as can belong to none but substantial Beings, or

which is all one, to Beings that subsist by themselves, and in whom all the Divine Attributes do subsist.

48. It is a very difficult matter to know under what Head to rank the Generality of Trinitarians, who will be thought to be neither real nor nominal Trinitarians, and I think cannot properly be said to believe any Trinity, since they themselves do not know what they believe, but are forced to confess in adoring the Trinity, they adore an inconceivable Mystery, which is only worshipping of Words and Sounds, since they cannot (it being inconceivable) frame any Idea of it, and the utmost they will venture to say of this most profound Mystery is, that the Scripture requires of us to believe on pain of Damnation, that there are Three, without telling us what the Three are, which at the most is but a Trinity of Cyphers, since they have no Idea further than the Number three (which it seems to them the Scripture is very curious of.) I think it cannot be presumed that Men of so great Sense, (to mention no other than *Sauro* and *Worcester*) would assert so absurd a thing, but that they knew if they declared what they suppose the Three to be, that they must inevitably run into Polytheism or Unitarianism. If they really know not what they are, why do they pay Divine Worship to each, which demonstrates that they (except they are guilty of wilful Idolatry) suppose each to be an Omnipotent Being? And do not these Men, for all their pretended Ignorance, say, that it is Blasphemy to deny that every one of the three is God, and that the first is God the Father, the second God the Son, and the third is God the Spirit? so that at last they do not make them Three *they know not what in God, but three Gods* whom they equally adore. If there were a Law enacted, that on pain of forfeiting their Lives, all must with an unfeigned Assent and Consent believe there are Three in the King, without declaring what the Three are, would not such an absurd Law suppose the Enactors of it out of their Senses? yet this is what these

these Men suppose the infinite Wisdom of God has done, in requiring Man on pain of Damnation, to believe there are Three in him; but what the Three are that is too sacred for us to know. Which is (since all our Ideas are terminated in three) to believe in and adore the number Three: but they say we have farther Ideas than the number Three, because they are called in Scripture, Father, Son, and Spirit: but the question will return, What Three are the Father, Son, and Spirit? Are they three Gods? No: Are they three Parts of God? No: Are they three Attributes, or Properties, or Powers of God? No: Three Names only? No: What manner or sort of three are they then? That, they say, is impossible to be known: So that it is evident our Idea's can reach no further than the number Three. But is not

Father in Scripture the Name of the most high God, and (as they say) so is Son and also Spirit? so that it is evident they are Names either of three Gods, or else three Names of one God: if they are Names of three Gods, then there are three Gods; if only of one God, then there is no more than a nominal difference between Father, Son, and Spirit; they are only three different Names to express the same God. These Men, as well as the rest of the Trinitarians, can readily tell what every one of the Three is, that he is God; yet what the Three are, or how they relate to God, they say it is impossible to discover: So that it seems the whole Mystery of the Trinity lieth in this, That tho every one can tell what each of the Three is, yet none can tell what Three they are, or how they are Three.

CHAP. VI.

Of the Real Trinitarians.

49. IT is, I suppose, by what has been said, evident, that the Hypothesis of but one Divine Substance, wholly confounds the Persons; and that they that believe it, were they consistent with their Principles, could not be Trinitarians: therefore a late Author justly calls them Nominal Trinitarians, and the others that hold three real natural Persons Real Trinitarians; who yet, as well as the nominal, confound the Persons, by saying they are the self-same God, because then they can no more be distinguished from one another, than the self-same God can be from himself. Each must have the same Substance, Personality, and every thing else that God has, because each is God; and they all must have the same that one another has, because they all are the same God. To suppose any difference between them, is to suppose a difference

between the same God and himself; and that the same God has somewhat in him that the same God has not. If they that are the same with a third, can never (as hath been proved) differ from one another; for the same reason they that differ from one another, can never be the same with a third, and consequently different Persons can never be the same God. To suppose God to be the same with each of the three Persons, is to suppose him the same and not the same with each. For if God be the same with the first Person, which he must be if the first Person is God, he can be no ways different from him; and yet he must be different from him, because he is the same with the second Person, who is different from the first; and he must be different from the second too, because he is the same with the third, who is different from both the
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other two. So that nothing can be more evident, if each has any Property or any thing else to distinguish him from the others, it necessarily supposeth different Gods, for the same God can be no way distinct from himself, or have any Property that he has not.

50. This Supposition that each Person is the same God, carries with it an innumerable company of most obvious Contradictions, of which I shall instance but in one or two; as the same God is, and is not self-existent from all eternity, self-existent as he is the Father, but doubly not self-existent, as he is supposed to be the Son and the Spirit; so the same God is both unbegotten and begotten, and yet this unbegotten begotten God, is neither unbegotten nor begotten, but proceeding from himself, as he is both Father and Son of himself.

51. If God the Son was incarnate, and not God the Father, do we not affirm the Incarnation of one God, and deny it of another? If you say they are the same God, then you affirm and deny at the same time the same thing of the same God. The Modalists, to evade this, say, that the same numerical God was incarnate with one Mode, and not incarnate with another, which is adding but a new Contradiction, by supposing a Mode to be, and not to be in the same God; for if God is incarnate, all the Modes that exist in him must be so too. If they are the self-same God, no Thoughts, Words, Actions, Operations, can any more proceed from one, and not from the other, than they can and cannot proceed from the same God; nor can they any more beget or be begotten from one another, or send or be sent by one another, or give or receive satisfaction, than the same God can be the begetter, and the begotten; the giver and receiver of the same satisfaction, the sender and the sent; and tho he is all these, yet he is none of these, for the Holy Ghost is none of them. If the Persons are the self-same God, how can their Majesty and Glory be (as the Creed saith) equal and co-eternal?

Is the same God equal and co-eternal with himself? In a word, if God beget God, either he beget another or the same God; if another, then undoubtedly there are two Gods; if the same, then God beget himself, tho at the same time he was in being and unbegotten. Nothing can be a greater contradiction, than to suppose the same God beget the same God, because it is to suppose him to be, before he is, and it must necessarily destroy a Trinity, because to beget ones self, is to beget nothing, because what is pretended to be begotten, was in being before. To say God beget a different Person is a very weak Evasion, for what is a Divine Person but God? So that the Objection will return, for this Person that is beget, either is the same, or a different God. How can you condemn the Unitarians when you cannot deny but that they worship the self-same God as you do? for you cannot (without introducing more than one) deny that he that is only the first Person is the self-same God, as he that is only the second; and he that is only one is the self-same God, as they are that are three Persons. If this be true, two Persons are really nothing at all: for abstract in your mind two Persons from God, there is nothing diminished from him; for the single Person that remains is the self-same God without any manner of alteration. So add to one Person that is God, not only two, but two thousand Persons, there is (if they are but the self-same God) really nothing added to him. Yet when you add and abstract a Person, you add and abstract God himself, because a Divine Person is God; if their one Person and your three Persons are the self-same God, there can be but a nominal difference between their one and your three Persons: so that nothing can be more evident upon supposition that the Son and Spirit are the self-same God with the Father, that the difference between the Unitarians and Trinitarians (were the last consistent with themselves) is only about words; they agree in the thing, both worship the self-

same Divine Being, or God; only with this difference, one Party calls him the Father, the other calls him Father, Son, and Spirit.

52. And the Trinitarians, when they are not writing against the Unitarians, give the same definition, or description of God, as they do, viz. That God is a simple self-existent Being, which is a description that all Men of sense and reason, in all times, have unanimously agreed in, which yet wholly excludes the Son and Spirit from being God, because neither of them is self-existent, nor would God be a simple Being, if he is compounded (or what other softer term you please to call it) of Father, Son, and Spirit. If you would give a description of God that includes both Son and Spirit, you ought to say, that the Supreme Being, is compounded of three supreme Beings, whereof only one is self-existent, yet these three Supreme Beings are but the self-same Supreme Being, or God, as any one of them is singly.

53. But how can either Son or Spirit be God, who is a Being absolutely perfect, when they want the greatest of Perfections, Self-existence? for whosoever has his Being (as they have) from another, cannot be self-existent, because to be self-existent, or from none, are the same.

54. Nor can the Son and Spirit be God, because they are not (as God certainly is) from Eternity; for whosoever has his Being (as they have) from another, must (except he can be before he begins to be) have his beginning from another; and therefore cannot be from Eternity, which supposeth no Beginning. Generation, Procession, (or what other term you use) must be giving a Being to that which always was in Being; or from Eternity, which is sufficiently absurd or else it must be a Change from no being to being; which supposeth nothing, or the negation of Being to precede being; and consequently the beginning of Being. So that to be generated from Eternity, is the same as to have and not to have

a Beginning. But the contradiction is most notorious in asserting the Spirit (supposing him a Person) to be from Eternity, because he owes his beginning (or at least part of it) to the Son, who himself had his beginning from another. To evade this, they make use of a distinction of Time and Nature, and say, that the Father was first in Nature but not in Time.

55. We cannot conceive any thing really first, but what is first in Time. First in Nature is purely a metaphysical Notion, and relates not to the existence or duration of real Beings, but only to the way of considering them, or rather external Denominations, than Beings themselves. As for instance, a Man tho he must be first in time, before he begets a Son, yet he cannot be a Father before he has a Son, because it is having a Son that makes him a Father, they being Relatives cannot exist but at the same time; yet the Metaphysicians when they consider the Relation, say, that the Father, *quatenus* Father, is first in Nature, but their reason of saying it, is, because the Person that is the Father, is first in Time. But these Gentlemen when they speak of God, and his Son, apply the distinction to the Beings themselves, and say, that the Person that is the Father, was not really, or in time before the Person he gave a Being to. But what plainer contradiction can there be than to say that the Son, who had his Origin or beginning from the Father, has had as long a duration as the Father who had no beginning? why may they not as well say, That a Being that shall have an end, shall continue as long in Time, tho not in Nature, as a Being that never shall have an end? The Truth of this is at first sight so clear, that tho some to uphold an Hypothesis (they find themselves obliged to maintain) are forced to deny it, yet it can hardly be presumed they are in earnest; and whatever zeal they may pretend to have for Religion, they take the right way to make Men Scepticks and Atheists, since even the existence of a God cannot be more evident

evident than what they deny. And it is as evident, that if the Son and Spirit are not self-existent, that they are but made Gods; that is, God the Father is their efficient Cause, who from no Being gave them their Beings, and consequently from no Gods, made them Gods; and a made God (taking

God in the highest sense) especially from all Eternity, is a pretty odd Notion. He that is not God of himself, as he cannot be that is not self-existent, because he has every thing that he has, his very Being from another, must be a made God.

CHAP. VII.

Of the 28 Propositions.

56. **B**UT to evade this (and which seems to be the Opinion most in vogue) it is said the Son and Spirit are necessary Emanations from the Father, and that therefore they are from Eternity: And this Opinion is strongly defended by the most ingenious Author of the 28 Propositions, by which he endeavours so to explain the Doctrine of the Trinity as not to make it contradictory to the Light of Nature.

He saith; " That three Men or Angels are not more expressly distinguished as different Persons or Substances by our Saviour and his Apostles, than the Father, Son and Spirit are; and he allows it to be a Contradiction to affirm, that the three Persons are but one Numerical Being or Substance. The Father only is self-existent, and that it is no less than a flat Contradiction to say, the Son and Spirit are self-existent, but that they necessarily emanate or issued forth from him from all Eternity.

57. That two infinite Substances should emanate from one infinite Substance, is so gross a Notion, that I wonder any Man of Sense (especially so judicious a Person) should be guilty of it: And my Reason is, because all Infinities, of what sort or nature soever, are equal; for if one Infinite be less than another, there must be some terminus, Bound or End of it, and consequently it cannot be Infinite, of which there can be

no Bound or End; or if one Infinite were any ways more than another, there would be somewhat more than Infinite, which is evidently absurd: Therefore to suppose two Infinities to emanate from one, is to suppose two to emanate from one when each is equal to the one from which it emanates. To suppose one Infinite Substance to emanate from another, is to suppose the whole infinite Substance to emanate from it self. And what makes it stranger is, that the two Infinite Substances emanated from the Father's single Substance, yet there was no Diminution in the Substance of the Father, it is as infinite as it was at first.

But it may be said, Why may not one Infinite as well as one Finite proceed from another? Nothing can be more absurd, than to suppose one Finite (much more two) to proceed from one but of the same Bigness. In a word, Whether a Being be finite or infinite, or of whatever sort or nature it is, to have two Beings of the same sort to proceed from it, each of which is equal to it, is to suppose twice as much to come from a Being as was in it. So that it is evident that an Infinite can no ways come from an Infinite, and consequently that the Son and Spirit are but Finite Beings, and that they, since they are not self-existent, were like all other Beings created out of nothing. For a Being must either be self-existent or produced of nothing; to come from a self-

existent Being, is the same as to be self-existent.

58. For whatever emanates, or any way proceeds from a self-existent Substance, must (except it were created and then joined to it) be as self-existent as the Substance from whence it proceeded, because before its Emanation it was a part of the self-existent Substance; it is only dividing one self-existent Substance into three (either bigger or less) self-existent Substances.

59. Upon supposition that the Son and Spirit are necessary Emanations, I cannot see how they owe their Origin more to the Father, than the Father owes his to them, since they are all three of a Substance that is self-existent; nor could the Father more than they be the Cause of the Separation, since they necessarily separated from one another; that is, this infinite Substance was divided into three infinite Parts, and that too from all Eternity, which is another Contradiction, tho he supposeth the contrary to be so, because whatever proceeds from a thing must first be it, except it can be in it and proceed from it at the same time.

60. In short, the Belief of Emanations had been somewhat tolerable in those that worshipped the Sun, a material God, to have supposed him divisible, and have Parts continually flow from him. They might have fancied the Rays to be their little Gods, as they supposed the Sun to be their great God. But it had even in them been most intolerable, to have believed those Rays that came from the Sun to be the Sun it self, as each of the Emanations is the very same God (for there is but one) that they flow from.

61. What he farther adds are direct Contradictions: "For, first, he supposeth the Father alone the most absolute perfect Being, and has several Perfections that the others are incapable of, as all those Perfections which relate to absolute Independence and Self-existence, which is the highest and greatest of Perfections; and the Father alone is the only true God,

"the only Good, and of himself God, and he is the first Original of Son and Spirit, as well as all other Beings; and that the Godhead in the highest sense can be but one numerically, of which the best Philosophers were satisfied by their Reason, and therefore the Oneness so frequently affirmed of him in Scripture is a numerical Oneness.

62. But after all, this seeming Exaltation of the Father above the other two (which one would think is sufficiently ungodding them) is only Words, and gives him no real Perfection or Preheminence above them, since he allows them all Divine Perfections but Self-existence and absolute Independence, but he makes them amends in giving them necessary Existence from all Eternity, which certainly is (if there be any difference) as great a Perfection as Self-existence it self, which is for no other reason so great a Perfection, but because it includes necessary Existence, which can belong to none but him that is self-existent, because all other Beings that owe their Existence to him (as all Beings whatever do) must wholly depend upon him for their Continuance in being as well as for their Being: For the same Power that was able to give them their Beings, must be able (tho perhaps it may never be his Will to do it) to take them away, because no greater Power is required to destroy a Being, than there was to make it exist; and if the Father has given Existence to any Being, which he cannot take away, but is must as necessarily exist as he, he would lose some of his Power; and consequently would cease to be Almighty. Self existence, separate from those Powers and Abilities which can only belong to a self-existent Being, is no Perfection; and any Being, tho from yesterday, yet if it had all these Perfections a self-existent Being has, would be as absolutely perfect as it. If the Persons have the same unlimited Perfections, yet if their manner of getting them was different, that would not cause any Inequality between them; yet is not

the manner of having them the same, had they not them as well as the Father necessarily from all Eternity? Wherein consists the intire Dependence of the Son and Spirit, not only for their Being, but for (as he saith *pag. 24*) their Continuance in Being? since they as necessarily exist, and that from all Eternity, as the Father, who, tho he gave them their Perfections, yet if he gave them the same he himself enjoys, and which he cannot deprive them of, why is he more absolutely perfect than they? If a Human Father had two Sons, who had the same Perfections as he, and did as necessarily exist as he, nay, were as old as he, who too could not help giving them their Being, why would they not be as equally perfect as he? Tho after all, what can be more absurd, supposing they are from Eternity, that they have a Father, or that any one can be (as he saith the Father is) their Original, since they had no Origin, or Beginning, but were from all Eternity?

63. How can the Father be greater than the Son and Spirit, or be the *only Good*, when they have the same unlimited Power and Goodness, as well as all other Divine Attributes? What greater Absurdity can there be, than that Beings that have infinite unlimited Perfections, should want some Perfections? A Being cannot be partly infinite and partly not; and if it has any, it has certainly all infinite Perfections, and the Father himself cannot have more than infinite Perfections; and since it is evident there can be no Inequality between infinite Beings, if there is any between the Father and his two Sons, it is evident the two latter are not infinite.

64. This Hypothesis more openly than any other, asserts more than one God; for the more he distinguisheth the Son and Spirit, the more he makes it impossible they should be the same God; nay, he saith that God, when applied to the Father, is taken in a different sense than when applied to the Son, and yet he would have us believe them but one God, and consequently the same God,

which is to believe them different, and yet the same; we must have different Ideas of them, because each is God in a different sense, and yet we must have the same Idea's, because they are the same God. If each is God, nothing can be more evident than they are not the same God: for he that is a most absolutely perfect God, the only true, the only good, and of himself God, can never be the same God with him that is not absolutely perfect, nor a true God, nor a good, nor of himself God. He that is an independent God, can never be the same God with him that is a dependent God, except you say the same God is both dependent and independent. Can he that is God in the highest sense, be the same God with him that has only a Right to the Name of God in a sense next to that which is appropriated to the Father, as he saith (*§. 15.*) the Son only has?

65. That the Son is a dependent God both for his Being and his Continuance in Being, and has a Right to the Name of God next to that which is appropriated to the Father, no Unitarian ever denied; but then they supposed it proved he was no infinite Being, because all Infinities being equal, he, if infinite, must have an equal Right; and because the Father is greater than the Son, they conclude the Son's Greatness was finite and limited, it being impossible to be greater than he that has unlimited infinite Greatness: and since he has but finite Perfections, they were so weak as to conclude there is an infinite Distance between the Father and him. What can be more absurd than to say, a Being that depends upon another for his Being and Continuance in Being, has necessarily unlimited Power, Wisdom, Goodness? Such a Being is a meer Creature, and has only a precarious Being, and of him it may be said, as of all other Creatures, that in God he lives and moves, and has his Being.

66. If God is (as he saith the Scripture affirms) numerically one, and the Father is this numerically one God, is it not directly

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contrary to the whole Tenour of Scripture to pay Divine Worship to any other? *The Lord your God is but one, and him alone shalt thou serve*; there is no other to be adored; or, which is all one, *Thou shalt have no other Gods but him*. I say, is it not strange, that any that owns this, should rob his God, who requires him to serve him with all the Faculties of his Soul and Body, of that Honour which he is so jealous of, and which he expressly forbids to be given to another, and give it to two dependent, and not true Gods?

But he supposeth they are but one God by an unconceivably close Union both in Will and Nature, which unconceivably close Union, he (§. 22.) saith is much more easily conceived than that between Body and Soul: And in another place he saith they are substantially united.

67. If there is but one God absolutely perfect, and the Father is this one God, nothing can be added to him, because if there can, he is not of himself absolutely perfect; therefore it is absurd to tack two Persons to him, who of himself is an all-sufficient, and an absolutely perfect God. But, upon supposition they are as entirely united as can be, yet whilst they remain distinct, each with his own personal unlimited Power, &c. each is a distinct, nay an absolute independent God; and the most that can be said is, that they are three united Gods. If the Union of their Substances, or any thing else make them but one God, why do you say each is God, and pay Divine Worship to each by himself? which is to say there is but one God, and yet worship three Gods: What can be more absurd than to say, they are one God by Union, and yet each is God distinct from the others? for he saith, God the Father is as distinct from God the Son, as any Man and his Son can be; they are substantially distinct. If Union was the Cause of their being one God, each must either be this one, that is, the same God, which I have already shown is impossible, or else they must be but Parts

of God, as Body and Soul are Parts of Man, and by their Union compose one God.

68. I think the real Trinitarians do very wisely in supposing their three infinite Substances to be as close together as can be, lest otherwise there should not be room enough for them in but one infinite Space: But if they are more than one, they cannot be Infinite, because being Substances of the same sort, they must be bounded and limited by one another. If the Substance of the Father be every-where, how can the Substance of the Son be every-where too at the same time, and after the same manner? For if Beings can be in the same place at the same time after the same manner, as they must be if they are of the same sort, it is impossible to distinguish them, because we have no other Mark of Distinction between Beings, but that they cannot be at the same place in the same manner at the same time.

69. They illustrate the Union that they suppose is between the Persons with several Similies, as for instance; They say the Persons are one God, as the Body and Soul are one Man: If the Body had been a Man, and the Soul a Man, and whilst they remained so but one Man, as each of the Three is God, and yet there is but one God; this I confess had been to the purpose. Another Simily they lay a great stress on, is of the close Union of the Sun with its Light and Heat. But if there were no more a Trinity in God than there is Light and Heat in the Sun, there could be no such thing as a Trinity; because tho there is in the Sun a Power to produce Heat and Light, as well as Pleasure and Pain in sensible Beings, yet there are no such Perceptions, as we call Heat and Light, in any Being, but those that are capable of feeling and seeing; this every common System demonstrates, and it is obvious to all but Children and Metaphysicians. In a word, nothing is more unlike than Theological Similies. Is the Union of the Stream to the Fountain from which it is perpetually running, a fit (tho it is a very frequent one) Simily to express an eternal close Union?

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The same may be said of the rest. But to return.

70. This Hypothesis is only rational, as far as it is Heretical; that is, as far as it contradicts the Doctrine of the Church and the Athanasian Creed, in supposing so great an Inequality between the Persons, as that one is the greater, and the other two lesser Gods, who can no more be the same God, than great and little can be the same.

And therefore the Trinitarians that are of this Opinion are to blame in paying the same Divine Worship to the two inferior Gods as they do to the superior; for whilst they make no difference in their manner of worshipping them, but pay the same Honour to each of the three, they in the most criminal manner that can be own them

to be Three equal, that is, three suprem Gods. But as there can be no Inequality between Infinite Beings, so we cannot pay a lower degree of Honour to the Son and Spirit, without supposing an infinite Distance between them; for as long as we pray to each, as having inherent in himself infinite Goodness, Power and Wisdom, and our Devotion terminates in each, we give each the same Divine Honour; we cannot alter those Idea's, and pay less Worship to the Son and Spirit without supposing that the Power or Greatness they have is not inherent in them from all Eternity, but that it is the free Gift of the Father; and tho we bow to them, it is to the Honour, and for the sake of God the Father, so that the Worship ultimately terminates in him.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the calm Discourse of the Trinity in the Godhead.

71. **T**HE next Hypothesis I should have examined is that of the *Inquirer's*, concerning a *Possibility of a Trinity in the Godhead*: but because it has been done so fully by an abler Hand, I shall only observe that he, to avoid having Three Gods, has invented (for the Notion is wholly his own) an Hypothesis that makes none of them God; for he supposeth Father, Son and Spirit to be three single Essences, and that they joined together do constitute the entire, individual Essence of God, which is in effect saying that each is but the third of God, because God being three Essences, and each Person being but a single Essence, he must want two Essences, that is, two parts of three to make him God. This is most certain, three Persons must be either three entire Gods, or three Parts of God, or else neither Gods nor Parts of God. The first cannot be asserted without directly owning three Gods, and by the last, all

three could not be God, therefore I suppose he made them three Parts, or three inadequate Gods: And that makes him (P. 50.) say neither Father, Son nor Spirit separately taken is God, and every where up and down his Book a great deal to this purpose, tho at the same time he contradicts himself, and saith, each is the only true God.

72. This Notion of three inadequate, imperfect, incomplete Gods, destroys the Eternity of God, because whatever is imperfect in its kind (as an inadequate God is) can never (as all allow) be from Eternity. Nor can three inadequate Gods or Persons by their Union make one adequate one-Beings of a different Nature (it is true) upon their Union may make a Being more perfect than when they were separate; as a Man has more Perfections than Body and Soul have in a State of Separation. But it is otherwise when Beings of the same Nature are joined, because their Perfections being

being of one and the same sort or nature, there cannot arise upon their Union any new or different Perfections from what they had when ununited, as it is evident in all Mixtures of the same sort; so three Spirits if they were united, would be so far from being more perfect, that they would only be a Clog and Hinderance to one another. But it is evident for another Reason too, that three Divine Spirits or Persons can acquire no Perfection by being united, because each has of himself, and by himself, infinite Perfections, and all three together can have but infinite Perfections. But it may be said that the Enquirer's Notion supposeth that each being God in an inadequate sense, each has not infinite Perfections.

73. But if each has not infinite, each has but finite Perfections, and any Number of Beings with finite, will never make one with infinite Perfections. And if each is a Being infinitely perfect, each is as much God in the most adequate sense, as all three together, because all can have but the same (that is, infinite) Perfections, as each has by himself, which not only proves the Union, but two of the Persons wholly useless and needless. For to what end should there be three Persons in God, when all three are no more wise, good and powerful than any one is singly? the three have but the same Attributes as each singly has.

74. Tho this Notion of three inadequate Gods is strangely absurd, yet none of the Trinitarians, besides the Author of the 28 Propositions, can say that any of their Persons is a most perfect God, because there are two others as perfect; nor can they say that any of them is a most high God, because there are two that equal him, which none can the most high God; nor can they say any is the only true God, since there are two others as truly God as he; nor can they say each is supream, because Supremacy admits of no Equality.

75. Tho he supposeth a more close and inconceivable Union between them than any between finite Beings, yet by making

them a Club or Cabal of Gods he destroys this intimate Union, and makes them as separate as so many Men; for (P. 55.) he saith, *They are delicious Society to one another*, and is so fond of this Notion, that he spends several Pages to show how they entertain one another with *mutual Complacency and everlasting Harmony*. But can any thing be more senseless than this? Society, it's true, is a Happiness to Men, because they want the Assistance of one another, and Conversation serves to instruct and divert them, who would be otherwise oppressed with their own Thoughts. But what Assistance can be given an Omnipotent Being? Or, what can be discovered to an Omniscent One? But I beg his Pardon for forgetting his Gods are but inadequate, and therefore may be ignorant of several things, and want each others Company to pass the time away most deliciously.

76. As gross as this Notion is, yet I can see no reason why it should seem absurd to any Trinitarian, when they suppose their three Divine Persons so distinct as that they discourse with one another; and when Man was made, they imagine there was a Consult of the whole Trinity about that weighty Affair, and that one said to the others, *Let us make Man*: Nay, they do not only suppose that they discoursed with one another, but that the Son as God really wanted Glory, and prayed to the Father (*Joh. 17. 6.*) to give it him; it is strange that a most high God should want and beg of another to supply him.

77. I shall make but one Remark more on my Enquirer, and then take my leave of him; he (P. 53.) saith, "If it be asked what we do conceive under the Notion of God but a necessary Spiritual Being?" I answer, this is a true Notion of God, and may be passable enough even among Pagans. But if this be a true Notion, the other must be a false one, for God cannot be but one, and yet three necessary Spiritual Beings, or Essences; and if he be three such Beings, the Pagans had a false Notion

Notion of God: But if the Pagans know no other, it is impossible we should, because the Apostle (*Rom. 1. 19, 20.*) speaking of the Pagans, saith, *What may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it them. For the invisible things of him from the Creation are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his Eternal Power and Godhead.* Therefore if there are three Divine Persons each of eternal Power and Godhead, equally Creators and Protectors of Mankind, the Creation and things that are made would have discovered them; but they are so far from that, that they demonstrate that there is but one Person that created the World. It is impossible that the same numerical Act or Acts of Creation could be done by three Persons, because the self-same Act cannot be done three times; and if one Person does an Act, no other can do the self-same. Consequently there could not be three supream Creators of Man, except you suppose they divided the Work between them, and one created the Head, another the Limbs, and the third the Body: But if one Person created the whole Man, how could two other Persons create him, except the same Man was three times created? It contradicts our clearest Idea's to suppose that one Person does an Action not of the same sort, but the very numerical Action another does. But supposing it possible, can it be presumed, that the Creation of the World, and the things that are made, which show the infinite Wisdom as well as Power of God, and which demonstrates that whatever he has made is not in vain and to no purpose, should teach Men that there are two needless and useless Persons in God himself, whose Actions are to no manner of purpose, only to do what the first Person is, not only all-sufficient to do, but actually and wholly does? The Father, it is certain, has both a free Will and Power to do and not to do whatever he pleaseth; but if the Son and Spirit must necessarily do the same Act, they are no other than necessary Agents, and all the

Power must be in him, with whom they cannot help doing the same Acts he wholly does: But if each has a distinct Will of his own, (as it is evident they have) what necessity is there that they must will and act, especially in indifferent Matters, the same things? Besides, it is apparently false that all three do, or concur to the doing the same Actions; the Scripture being full of Actions, especially those they do to one another, as one being sent by another, their going from and returning to one another, which is impossible to suppose they all equally concurr'd in. Nay, do not the Trinitarians say that *Opera Trinitatis ad intra sunt divisa?* And what greater Argument can there be that they are separate Gods, than that they act separately? The Father acted when the Son and Spirit did not, nor could not act, because they were not in Being, it being the Father's Act of Generation that gave them their Being. So that it is evident one can act separately from the others, and consequently they cannot be one but in a Civil, Political or Moral, and not in a Natural Sense. But they say they are one in a Natural Sense *ad extra*, that is, in relation to the Creatures. But can the Divine Beings be one and not one in a Natural Sense, or be and not be at the same time naturally united? But they cannot deny that they act separately *ad extra*, even with respect to the Creatures: Did not God the Son take the Man Christ into his Godhead, when neither of the others took him into theirs, or were united to him? Nay, they are so far from being one in a Natural Sense, that there is not so much as a Moral Union between them, they have different Wills and Inclinations; as for instance, The first Person will not forgive Mankind without having Satisfaction given him even by a Divine Person; nay, they say his Justice could not be satisfied without it. But why could not the Justice of the first Person be satisfied without infinite Satisfaction, as well as that of the second Person, who is the self-same God, and consequently samely offended? Yet he is so far

from being of the same Mind with the Father in requiring Satisfaction to be given him by a Divine Person, or by any other, that he freely offered himself to suffer, even to Death, to appease the Wrath of the first Person; and still intercedes for us to the Father, of which there could be no need if they were of the same Mind concerning Mankind. As to the third Person, tho he is equally or rather samely offended, he seems to be of a different Mind from both, and neither gives nor receives Satisfaction.

78. By what has been said (tho a great many more Instances might be brought) it is evident, that they are not one either *ad intra*, or *ad extra* in a natural Sense, and that the Trinitarians (were they consistent with themselves) can but suppose them a Council or Committee of Gods, where sometimes one is President, and sometimes another is in the Chair, and accordingly things run in each of their Names, as the Works of the Creation in the Father's Name, tho each is equally a Creator, so the Son redeems, and the Spirit sanctifieth Mankind, tho they are all three equally Redeemers and Sanctifiers.

79. As the Creation evidently proves that there is but one Divine Person, so the Protection and Preservation of the World suppose but one supream Governour, even that Person that created all things. Three, each of whom is a supream Governour, (supream Power being indivisible) is a Contradiction, because it supposeth each to be and not to be supream. The Heathens dividing the supream Government of the Universe between the three Brethren *Jupiter*, *Neptune* and *Pluto*, was intelligible, because each had supream Power, not over the whole, but only a part of the Universe. I wonder under what Form of Government the Trinitarians reckon that of the Universe! Monarchy it cannot be, because there is in that but one Person that is Supream, but here are Three, each of whom is Supream.

80. As the Creation, Preservation and

supream Government of the Universe demonstrate that there is but one Divine Person, so that Adoration, Love and Gratitude, that by the Light of Nature as well as God's revealed Will, is due for our Creation and Preservation, can be paid but to one Divine Person, whom we are to love and adore above all other Persons and Things; which is impossible to be done if we must pay equal Love, Gratitude and Adoration to two others, because that would be robbing him, by giving that to others which is his due, in which consists the Crime of Polytheism: It can no ways allay the Crime to call them Persons instead of Gods, since paying Divine Worship to them does as much rob the only One of his due, as if you had called them so many Gods. If it be our Duty (which I suppose none will deny) to love God with all our Hearts and Souls above all other Things and Persons, and to adore him with all the Faculties of our Souls and Bodies to the utmost of our Power, it must be our Duty to love the Father so; but then how is it possible to love two other Persons as much as him, and to pay them equal Adoration? we can then give him but a third of our Devotion, of our Love, or of our Hearts and Souls, except we have a Trinity of Hearts and Souls. In short, it is impossible to pay that Duty which we owe to the Supream Governour of the Universe (who requires the whole Man) to more Divine Persons than one, as it is to pay Allegiance to more than one Supream Human Person.

81. In a word, it is so very evident by the Light of Nature, (which Revelation never contradicts) that there is but one Divine Being, call him God, Person, Mind, Spirit, or what else you please, with a Power to know and do all things; that the Heathens were without Excuse in worshipping of several. And if their Crime was so great, how much greater must theirs be, who not only sin against the Light of Nature, but also express Revelation, in paying Divine Worship to more than one necessary

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cessary Spiritual Being? If paying Divine Worship to one Being or Person is in the highest sense that can be the acknowledging one God, why is not paying the same Worship to another Person the owning of another God? If adoring several Beings, each singly and by himself, is not the worshipping more Gods than one, it is impossible to be guilty of Polytheism, it is but calling them Divine Almighty Persons; and tho you say each is God, and pay Divine Worship to each, you are out of danger of committing Idolatry?

82. Not only the Unitarians, but all Mankind that worship but one Divine Being, are greatly scandalized at those Christians that pay Divine Worship to several, and demand of them why that which they account the greatest of Crimes in the Heathens should be the greatest of Vertues in themselves. I beseech you (for it is a thing of infinite Consequence) to let me understand how the Heathens in their Devotions did, or could do more to distinguish their Divine Beings than you, by praying to each by himself? that is, when they prayed to one they did not pray to the other, but their Devotion terminated on each: Do we not do the same thing? as when we pray to the Father, we do not pray to the Son, but to each by himself: And do we not give to each the Titles and Attributes of a most high God, and in our Prayers make as great Distinction between the Father and Son, as ever the Heathens did between Father *Jupiter* and Son *Hercules*? Do we not desire one to be kind to us for the sake of the other, and one to mediate to the other, and an hundred more Instances, even where we oppose one to the other? And do we not in our Creeds expressly say, the Son is *God of God, very God of very God*? How can we after that pretend to say they are the same God? In a word,

it is impossible for the Heathens to relate more different or more opposite Actions of *Jupiter* and *Hercules*, than you do of God the Father and God the Son, which demonstrates that you make as great a Distinction or Difference between Objects of your Devotion as they did, or as it is possible to do. Nay, it is impossible for Men to conceive them the same God, when such different Actions are reported of them, as God the Father sending God the Son, and then again, both sending the Spirit; God the Son descending from Heaven and assuming Flesh, when neither of the others did: Again, God the Spirit descended in a Bodily Shape, God the Father or God the Son not descending, and an hundred other Actions which the Scripture relates of one God, and debies of the other two Gods. In short, all the Difference between you and the Pagans (as all Mankind besides your selves agree in) is, that tho you alike worship more Beings than one, yet they do not increase their Guilt by denying their Polytheism, nor are they so cruel in persecuting them that differ from them, nor do they so much sin against their own Reason, in framing so many absurd inconsistent Notions, and contradictory Articles of Belief.

83. These things are so frequently objected, and so little Care is taken to answer them by our Writers, who, for the most part are only fond of venting absurd and silly Hypotheses inconsistent with their manner of Worship, that I thought I could not do better than to represent these things to you, that we may (if it be possible) receive a full and satisfactory Answer. As to the Authors of the 28 Propositions, and of the Enquiry, their Notions are much more tolerable than what has been urged by others, and they avoid a great many Contradictions others are full of:

CHAP. IX.

Of the Defence of Dr. Sherlock's Notions.

BUT none so much as the Author of the Defence of the Dean of *Pauls* against the Animadverter, in which one might after so long a Silence of the Dean, reasonably expect all that can be said to clear him from the Imputation of Tricheism, so much and so home charged on him by his own Partry.

84. The Design of his Book seems to be, to prove that those that pay Divine Worship to three Persons, are as much guilty of Idolatry, as they that worship three Minds, because Mind and Person are the same; and he proves they are the same with one another, because they are the same with God; and (P. 84.) every Person is by himself God, and God is an infinite Mind; and (P. 83.) God and infinite Mind are convertible Terms, and that God is an infinite Mind, and an infinite Mind is God; and that the Socinians therefore conclude, that God is but one Person, because God is but one infinite Mind. If God, infinite Mind, and Person, are convertible Terms, there is nothing more contained in the Idea of one than of the others, they are only different words to express the same Being. How can he then, without contradicting himself, say, that there are three Persons or Minds, and not three Gods; or say three Minds by mutual Consciousness are one Mind, without saying three Persons are by the same but one Person? And (P. 91.) tho he makes no Distinction between Essence, or Substance and Person; the Divine Essence he saith is a substantial Person, or the Divine Substance, yet he will by no means allow as many Substances as Persons. But to avoid the Contradiction of three Persons and but one Essence, since he makes Person and Essence

the same, he saith the Essence is repeated without being multiplied, nay, without the least Change or Alteration in three distinct Persons: but must not then a Person, since Person and Essence are the same, be repeated in three Essences without the least Change or Alteration? But what can Repetition be, or what can it cause, when it makes no manner of Change or Alteration? Is not Repetition a numerical Multiplication? If it be not that, it is nothing at all, and he useth Distinctions without any manner of difference; so he does when he saith the Divine Essence is not a single, but an individual Essence: If he knew any difference between single and individual, or between Repetition or Multiplication, why had he not shown it? If the Divine Essence is but one, it is single; if it be not single, it must be double or treble, and consequently a double or treble God: But how can he help making three Essences, when (P. 36.) the substantial Persons are as distinct as any three Men whatsoever? and three Men who are essentially, substantially distinct, are certainly three distinct Essences. What he saith (P. 91.) is a whole Troop of Contradictions, "That the whole Divine Essence is originally in God the Father, that this same Essence was by eternal Generation communicated to the Son, and subsists distinctly in him, and that the same Essence is by eternal Procession communicated by the Father and Son to the Spirit, and subsists distinctly in him."

85. If the Father communicated his Essence to the Son, he communicated himself, who is no ways distinct from his Essence; or could he give his numerical Essence to his Son, and yet keep it himself? which is to

keep it and yet part with it, to give it and not to give it. Did the Father and Son communicate each a whole Essence, or but each a part to the Spirit? if each a whole, then he has two Essences; if each a part, then the Divine Essence is divisible. If each has the same numerical Essence, and consequently the same Properties; and if there are such things in the Divine Essence as Modes, the same Modes, because they are the Modes of the Divine Essence, which is the same in each Person; what Difference or what Distinction is there between them? And what makes the Absurdity the more palpable is, that each enjoys the Essence distinctly, and yet it is in common; but what is it to enjoy a thing distinctly, but to have it to ones self distinct from all others, and consequently not in common? It's true, several things are said to be in common, that is, undivided, as a Field, where each Person enjoys his share of it by feeding his proportion of Cattel, but no two can have the same, the same thing, or a Right to the same thing, except Dr. *Sherlock's* two Kings, who in his case of Allegiance have at the same time a Right to the same Crown. But these Absurdities are not at all strange in a Man that can assert a thing is distinct, and yet the same, as (*P. 20.*) he saith an Image-man is distinct from the Original Man, and yet the same with him.

86. He saith the three Persons are not three Gods, because they have not separate Existence; but if the Persons have (as he saith, *P. 36.*) all Divine Perfections as distinct from each other as any three Persons whatsoever, they are, tho not separate, yet diverse and different Gods, and the worshipping three different and diverse Gods is certainly as much Polytheism as the worshipping three separate Gods. But as long as each has a Power to know and do every thing, without the Help and Assistance of the others; and there are a great many Examples where one acts when the others do not, it is an evident Demonstration they are as separate to all Intents and Purposes,

as we can imagine Spiritual Beings to be. But of this I have sufficiently spoken already.

87. Yet if there were need of any other Argument to prove they have a separate Existence, he according to his usual Method of pulling down what he designs to build up, affords us a Demonstration; for (*P. 43.*) he saith, that Self-consciousness makes a Mind or Spirit one with it-self, and distinguisheth and separates it from all other Minds and Spirits. And consequently the Three Divine Minds or Persons who are self-conscious Beings, are Three separate Minds, because each's Self-consciousness makes him a distinct and separate Mind from the rest. But he saith, they are unseparate by Mutual-consciousness: But can those Beings, who are always separate by Self-consciousness, because always self-conscious, be unseparate by Mutual-consciousness; which is to be, and not to be separate at the same time?

88. After all the stir he makes about Mutual-consciousness, it is evident all Consciousness must be Self-consciousness: for whatever Knowledge several Beings may have of one another, yet each is conscious of this Knowledge, by his own Self-consciousness, because a Being can only be conscious of what he himself knows; and whatever Subject his Knowledge is conversant about, it must be his own Knowledge he is conscious of. And if the Persons are conscious that one is not the other, and that each is God, they must be conscious that they are Three Gods. It is impossible to suppose them Three Gods, without supposing each to be conscious of all that is in the others; otherwise it would (since they cannot but be conscious of what they know) argue Ignorance in them; and the more they are thus conscious, the more they apprehend themselves to be Three Gods; the same God can never be mutually conscious with himself. If Minds or Spirits have no other ways of being one, but by Mutual consciousness, (which he affirms in several places) they can never be one; for they must be one, before

before they can be conscious that they are one, which he cannot deny : And (P. 71.) he saith, to affirm they are one by Mutual-consciousness, is not to affirm that Mutual-consciousness is the Cause of their being One : But is not that by which they are one, the Cause of their being one ?

89. I am afraid I have tired my Reader with the Repetition of so much nauseous stuff ; therefore I shall say no more of this profound Author, but that it is no wonder that his whole Book (where we have Idea's of what he saith) is nothing else but saying and unsaying things, since he has a mind to keep his old Tritheistical Notion of Three infinite Substances, as distinct as any Beings whatever ; and yet to assert with his good Friend the Animadverter, that there is but One infinite Substance.

90. I think it is not strange that a Man, who could so perversely maintain a Doctrine so opposite to the good of Mankind, as absolute Passive Obedience is, and had the Assurance to preach up Slavery to be *jure Divino*, should openly promote another so directly contrary to the Honour of One God, as the paying Divine Worship to Three infinite Almighty Spirits ; (who no more differ from Three Gods, than Repetition and Multiplication do differ from one another ;) by which he has done his utmost (and no more can be expected) to destroy the two grand Commandments, (of which the other are but so many Branches) the Honour of God, and the Good of Mankind ; both which Subjects he has handled alike, that is, he has not writ a Page without contradicting himself. But I shall say no more of him, though less I ought not to say of a Man that so abominably prevaricates, and banters in a Subject of infinite Concern ; and he that gives no quarter, but treats all his Adversaries with Scorn, Contempt, and *Billinggate*, can hardly expect Panegyricks : But I leave him to the Animadverter, against whom his Book is chiefly designed, to do Mankind and himself

Justice on the most self-inconsistent, and (he would not scruple to add) the most self-conceited of all self-conscious Animals.

91. But to return, there are none of these Hypotheses but what the Heathens as well as the Orthodox, might have made use of to justify their Polytheism, and yet continued to have their several Objects of Divine Worship, and their usual manners of worshipping them. Might they not have said they were but one God, because they had but one common Nature ? or one God, because there was an inconceivable close Union between them ? Or might they not have said, that Father *Satur* communicated his numerical Essence to a multitude of Sons and Daughters ? or said, that tho each is God, they were several Modes of one God ? or said that they were but one God by mutual Consciousness ? Or, what if they had said they were several Persons and but one God, tho each Person was God ? What Answer would be made to a Heathen that would be so poor spirited as to banter after a Trinitarian Manner, but only, if you believe them but one God, why do you worship them as several, each by himself ? Would not such an Answer equally affect a Trinitarian as well as a Heathen, since the Persons he adores are as much distinct Objects of Divine Worship, as those the Heathens worshipped ? And if such Pretences would not excuse the Heathens from being guilty of Polytheism, why should it the Trinitarians ? If having three Objects of Divine Worship, a Divine Person that is called the Father, another Divine Person that is called the Son, and a third that is called the Spirit, who are adored each by himself, be not owning more Gods than one, why is a thousand Objects of Divine Worship owning more Gods, since thousands as well as three are but Unites multiplied ? And if having one Divine Person for an Object of the highest Worship is adoring one God, the having three will be as much the having three Gods, as the having a thousand will be a thousand Gods. But the Trinitarians think
they

they cannot be guilty of Polytheism, except they call their three Objects of Divine Worship three Gods, as if the Names they call them by would alter the matter. If one call them three Gods, and another three Persons, if they agree in the Idea's, and one means the same by Person as the other does by God, *viz.* an infinite Almighty Being, as they say each of the three Persons is, they are equally guilty of Polytheism. It is not barely affirming that there are several Gods, if People do not pay Divine Worship to them, that makes them guilty of Idolatry; so on the contrary, if they say there is but one God, and yet have several Objects of Divine Worship, and give to each severally, separately and apart from the other, all Divine Titles and Attributes, tho' they called them, when they pretend to vindicate themselves from Polytheism, Modes, Faculties, &c. that would not hinder them from being guilty of Idolatry. Is it not the Design both of the Old and New Testament, to forbid People having several Objects of Divine Worship? And if Oneness, when applied to God, is not to be taken in the same sense as when applied to other Beings, Men could never distinguish between Polytheism and Theism. Is not One God one Infinite Spirit, as one Angel is a finite one? Does not Christ declare God is a Spirit, how then dare People say that God is three Minds, Spirits, Intelligent Persons?

92. Besides, what can be more ridiculous than the Attempt of the real Trinitarians, in endeavouring to prove that three Uncreate, Eternal, Almighty, All-knowing Spirits, Minds, Intelligent Essences, each of whom is God, are but one Uncreate, Eternal, Almighty, All-knowing Mind, Spirit, Essence or God? which is to say, that not only three Spirits, Essences, Gods, are but one Spirit, Essence or God, but that three Uncreate, three Eternals, three Almighties, three All-knowing, are but one Uncreate, one Eternal, one Almighty, one All-knowing? Is it not absurd in it self to say, one God is compounded (or what other Term you make

use of) of three Gods, or three Almighty Persons? But is it not much more absurd to pay Divine Worship to every one of the three? which is acting contrary to your words; and it demonstrates that you do not take God to be compounded of three, but that they are three Gods: the more you say they are but one God, the more you contradict your selves in saying each is God. Each God, since they are all three numerically distinct Essences, must be essentially different from the rest, and consequently a different God; for the same God can never be essentially different from himself.

93. But the Nominal Trinitarians most grossly prevaricate in pretending that the Three are three Modes, three Faculties, three Attributes of God, when they, by paying the highest Adoration to each by himself, own them to be three Gods: nothing can be at a greater distance than their Actions and their Words; yet this much must be said for them, that they evidently demonstrate the real or substantial Trinitarians are direct Polytheists, and on the contrary, the Real prove the Nominals no other, I mean in their Writings, than disguised Unitarians, and that they really destroy the Persons and confound the Trinity. And indeed as long as both own there is no more in the Idea of God, than there is in every one of the Three, which they cannot deny as long as they say every one of them is God, it is impossible not to confound the Three, or else not to set up three Gods. It is not saying there are three Modes, Attributes, Essences, Somewhats in God, that makes the Unitarians oppose you, they would not give themselves nor you the trouble to confute such ridiculous Notions, if you did not make that a Pretence to pay Divine Worship to each of the Three, now to one, and then to another, and straight to a third, which (as I have already proved) can never be done without Idolatry.

94. It would be much more generous as well as honest, (say the Unitarians) to own
your

your worshipping of three Gods, than to shuffle backward and forward, say and unsay, and stuff a Creed with more Contradictions than there are Lines in it, and invent so many absurd and senseless Distinctions, which none would do, but to hide and disguise what is most absurd Polytheism, which yet in your publick Worship (where there is no room for such Distinctions) is as evident as that of the Heathens, because

you as much distinguish God the Father from God the Son, or God the Spirit, as ever they did God *Jupiter* from God *Neptune*, or God *Pluto*. And it is evident that in Scripture God the Father is as much distinguished from the Son, as two Men or Angels can be; and Mankind that are incapable of apprehending these Metaphysical Niceties and subtle Distinctions, cannot but conceive them so.

CHAP. X.

Of Mystery.

95. **T**HE chief Artifice by which the Doctrine of the Trinity has so long prevailed is, by perswading People that they must not examine into the Reasonableness of it, because it is a Mystery which they say is above Reason, and which we ought to believe whether we apprehend it or not. Children, like White Paper, are capable of any Impression, and if they must not when Men examine into the Reasonableness of what they have been taught, because it is pretended to be a Mystery, they may be obliged to assert the most absurd and senseless Things as well as the most rational.

96. A few words concerning what we are, and what we are not capable of believing, will, I hope, put an end to this long and tedious Controversy concerning Mysteries. The Subject of any Man's Belief are those Idea's he has in his Mind concerning any thing; and he believes a thing to be true, when he supposeth those Idea's he has of it are agreeable to, or do represent the thing as it is: we can have no Belief when we have no Idea's to exercise our Belief about; and if we have but a few, or imperfect Idea's, our Belief can be extended no farther than those few or imperfect Idea's.

97. As we cannot believe where we have no Idea's, so we cannot believe those Idea's

that are contradictory to be true, because they contain an Affirmation and a Negation of the same thing. If it were possible to believe either a Mystery, or a Contradiction, it seems more easy to believe the latter, because in a Contradiction we have Idea's and those too so clear and distinct, that we know it is impossible to predicate them at the same time of any one Subject, whether Divine or Human. But in a Mystery we have no Idea's at all: by this any one may judge of this grand Dispute between the Trinitarians and Unitarians concerning Mysteries in general, and particularly the deepest of all Mysteries, those of the Trinity, which the latter say they are incapable of believing, because they have no Idea's concerning them, or none but contradictory ones. They do not disbelieve them, because they cannot (as their Adversaries most disingenuously object against them) apprehend the manner how they are done, but because they do not apprehend what the things are that are to be believed. On the contrary, the Orthodox upon all occasions thunder it from their Pulpits, that Matters of Faith are above Reason, and that God has a Right to require of us to believe on his Word what we do not apprehend or understand; that is, we must believe those Idea's we have of a

Mystery

Mystery to be true, tho by its being a Mystery we have no Idea's at all concerning it; and they pretend to give Instances in several things which they say we are to believe, tho we do not understand them; and that God's Eternity, Infinity, Omnipresence can be no more apprehended than the Trinity.

98. The Idea's we have of God's Eternity, Infinity, Omnipresence, Omniscience, and all that we are required to believe concerning them, are so clear and distinct, that an ordinary Capacity apprehends what we mean when we say that God is Eternal, Infinite, Omniscient, Omnipresent. Tho these things themselves are intelligible, yet the manner of them is impossible to be apprehended, and as we are now framed, we are not capable of having it revealed to us; and none but a blind Metaphysician who pretends to know all things, but really knows nothing, would be so vain as to attempt to explain the manner of God's Omnipresence, or his Omniscience. It is no wonder there are insuperable Difficulties about the manner of things of this nature, when there are as great Difficulties in apprehending the manner of Nature's operating in the most common things, which things none disbelieveth, because he does not apprehend how they are done. Who disbelieveth there is such a Creature as Man, tho he does not know how he was formed? But it is quite otherwise when we cannot apprehend the things themselves, there is then an absolute Impossibility of believing them; none can believe that God is three Persons, and yet one Person is God, the very same God that is three Persons; so none can believe that the Idea of God is contained in the Idea of Person, and yet there are not as many Gods as Persons: Nor can we believe that God is three ways the same God. The Schools make use of this Cant for no other Reason, but because it being unintelligible, they thought it could not be confuted: but the same Unintelligibleness that hinders it from being confuted, hinders it from being believed. And we can as little believe that there are three in-

finite Wisdoms, Powers, &c. in one God, which is adding infinite Additions to what is already Infinite, which yet must be, if there are, as the real Trinitarians say, three infinitely Wise, Powerful Minds, Spirits, Essences, Intelligent Persons in one God. In a word, there never was or ever can be a Trinitarian, because it is impossible to believe so plain a Contradiction, as that all three are but one God, and yet every one of the Three is a God. But it is generally said our Idea's are gross and material, and therefore we must not believe of infinite and immaterial things as they represent them to us.

99. Whatsoever God has designed we should believe, he has made us capable of having clear and distinct Idea's of: But tho it should be granted that we may have false Conceptions and Idea's of things, yet the utmost we can do, is to believe or not believe those Idea's; where they fail, there our Belief must end. God has set the same Limits to our Belief as to our Perceptions; and Belief belongs to us as we are Rational Creatures: what is above our Reason to apprehend, is also above our Belief: without the Bounds of our Reason we are but upon the same Level with Beasts, and are no more than they capable of Belief, or of having any thing revealed to us.

100. As we are not capable of believing where we have no Idea's, or none but contradictory, so where we have clear and distinct Idea's we cannot be mistaken, without destroying the Principles and Foundation of all Knowledge and all Evidence, even of the Existence of a God and of all Religion, as well Natural as Revealed: For what other Motive have I to believe there is a God, but because my Reason gives me clear and distinct Idea's of the Truth of it? And it is by Reason alone that we can judge whether God has any revealed Will, or which is his revealed Will; and if there should be any thing in that which is said to be his revealed Will contrary to Reason, it would destroy the only Argument we have to believe in the Word of God. Reason is as much the Word,

the Will, and Revelation of God as the written Word it self, and without which the written Word would be wholly useless.

101. We cannot be as sure of any thing we receive by Tradition, as we are of those things God has discovered to us by original Revelation, I mean those things of which he has given us clear and distinct Idea's: we cannot be so certain as we are of these, that God so long since revealed his Will to such Persons; or that they did not mistake their Fancies and Dreams for Revelation; or that they did rightly apprehend what was spoken to them; and that it has been exactly and religiously delivered down to us at so great a distance without any Alterations or Additions; or that we apprehend it in the right sense, considering moral things are capable of receiving vastly different Interpretations, and the Divine Speech as well as Human is subject to divers Senses; especially since we are so little acquainted with the particular Phrases and peculiar Idioms of the Tongues the Scripture was written in, and those Customs among the Eastern Nations it so much alludes to. To which an hundred things might be added, as the different Readings, the different Significations of the same Words, and even the different Pointings, which alone may strangely vary the Sense. But the innumerable Sects of Christians that so widely differ about the meaning of the plainest Texts, sufficiently shew how subject we are to mistake; therefore to prefer Tradition before our clearest Idea's, is to prefer probable before certain, Belief before Knowledge, that which we possibly may be mistaken in, before what we are most certain of; which would leave no difference between Truth and Falshood, no means of Credible and Incredible; which would destroy all the Principles and Foundation of that Knowledge God has given us, and render all our Faculties useless, and wholly confound the most excellent Part of his Workmanship, our Understanding. In short, if we admit not that there is a due Capacity in the Soul of Man to judg found-

ly concerning Matters of Religion, we do entirely root out the Grounds of all Religion, we make our selves meer Machines, incapable of Virtue and Vice, of Good and Evil. And if, on the other side, we admit the Adequateness of our Capacities, and the Rectitude of our Judgments in these Matters, and at the same time pretend to maintain the Truth of the Christian Religion, we must allow there is an exact Conformity between the Principles of the one and of the other, for there can be no Disagreement in Truth; and if Christianity were found contradictory to any thing the Light of Nature makes manifest, or should require of us to believe any thing of which we could form no Idea's, or none but contradictory ones, we should be forced so far to acknowledge it faulty and false; and therefore if any Expression in Scripture seems to require the Belief of any such, we must interpret such Expressions in a figurative Sense.

102. It is indeed impossible, as we are now made, to have any thing which we clearly apprehend is a Contradiction to be revealed to us, and we cannot have clearer Idea's of any thing than of Numbers; we perfectly apprehend the difference of three and one; therefore, if it should be pretended to be revealed that three and one are the same, which they must be if three Persons and one are the same numerical God, because there is no more in the three Persons than in one; so that three and one, and Person and Persons, which are the Subjects of three and one, are the same numerical Being; all that is in this case really revealed, is the Letters and Words without any other meaning, than that three, which is one thrice multiplied, by being the same with one, is not thrice multiplied. To say three Persons and one Person are the same God, is as great a Contradiction, as to say three Persons and one Person are the same, because (as I have already proved) God and Person are the same; which instead of being a rational Faith, destroys both our Reason and

and Faith. But because Mystery has been the Pretence, by which some Men for so many Ages have solemnly repeated Propositions as necessary to Salvation, which they could no more apprehend than a round Square, or a Mountain without a Valley: I shall add one word or two more concerning it, and then conclude.

103. Mystery can never be a part of Religion, because it cannot tend to the Honour of God, since it is what we know of God, not what we do not know, that makes us honour him: the more we know of him the more we honour him, and the less there is of Mystery in Religion, the brighter and clearer it appears. And it would be inconsistent with the Goodness of God, who would have all Men come to the Knowledge of his Truth, not to give us clear and distinct Ideas of what we are to believe or practise. His Laws are a trial of (what is in our Power) our Obedience, but not of (what is not) our Understanding. And how difficult soever they are in their *Practise*, they are plain and easy in their *Theory*, and fitted to the Capacity of the Unlearned and Simple, far the greatest part of Mankind. As Mystery can no ways tend to the Honour of God,

so it can no ways promote (tho the Mystery of Inquiry may the Gain of some particular Persons) the Good of Man. Mysteries are so far from being a part of Religion, that it was the chief End of Christ's coming to destroy them, that is, by revealing them, which is the only way a Mystery or Secret can be destroyed; and the end of the Apostles Mission was to make known those things which until then were Mysteries, and to bring to Light to those that sat in Darkness, the hidden things of God.

104. In short, if Christ and Antichrist are diametrically opposite, the Signs and Characters that belong to each must be as opposite. Can Mystery, to which may be added Persecution (the only Arts by which Popery has prevail'd) which are the chief Signs and Characters of Antichrist, and are written on the Forehead of the mighty Whore, by pretence of which she displays her horrid Blasphemies, be Signs and Tokens to discover Christ and his Doctrine by? What has Christ to do with Antichrist? or is the Faith our Saviour taught, so near akin to the Idolatrous Blasphemies of the Man of Sin, that both should have the same Marks, the same Characters, the same Tokens?

The Conclusion.

105. **B**UT I must beg your Pardon for having exceeded the usual length of a Letter; therefore I shall only add, that you (if any) who are as numerous, and I think as learned as ever any Council was, are the most capable to free the Doctrine of the Trinity from these (at least seeming) Contradictions; which if you undertake to solve, I desire you will tell us what you mean by Person and God. And that no Deceit may lie in obscure, doubtful or ambiguous Terms, if you make use of any such, or put an uncommon Sense (which some call a Theological

Sense) on common Words, that you will explain them, and in short, write so intelligibly, that you may make it appear, that what you write, is only for the sake of Truth, and not for any sinister Ends; by which means all unprejudiced Christians may know whether the Doctrine of the Trinity is consistent with it self, and the Light of Nature, which will be a great Obligation on all those that love the Honour of the only true God, but especially on,

Dic. 10. 1694.

Sirs, Yours, &c.

T H E E N D.

ERRATA. Page 5. col. 2. line *antepenult.* for *or*, read *and*. P. 7. c. 2. l. 19. r. it *is* self. P. 20. c. 1. l. 25. r. *be* in it. P. 22. c. 1. l. 12. r. *most* true.